Matthew 8

The King's Authority Revealed

Key Verse

"What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Matthew 8:27

Big Idea

Yeshua does not merely teach with authority. He possesses authority over sickness, creation, spiritual powers, and the lives of those He calls to follow Him. The question Matthew places before us is not simply whether we recognize His authority, but how we respond to the King who possesses it.

Introduction

Matthew 7 ended with astonishment. The crowds had listened to Yeshua teach and recognized that He spoke "as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:29). Matthew 8 now shows us what that authority looks like when Yeshua comes down from the mountain and enters the ordinary world of sickness, exclusion, fear, storms, spiritual oppression, and human need. The authority heard in His words becomes visible in His actions.

Matthew deliberately brings us from teaching to demonstration. Yeshua touches a man with leprosy and makes him clean. He responds to the appeal of a Roman centurion and heals his servant without even entering the house. He restores Peter's mother-in-law, receives the sick and demonized who gather at the door, commands a violent storm, and confronts demonic powers. Nothing in the chapter lies outside His authority.

But Matthew 8 is not simply a catalogue of miracles. Each encounter tells us something about the King and His Kingdom. The leper is someone others would avoid touching. The centurion is a Gentile and an officer of the occupying power. The disciples discover that following Yeshua does not mean avoiding storms. Those who volunteer to follow Him learn that discipleship carries a cost. And even the demons recognize an authority that many human beings are still trying to understand.

The chapter therefore asks more than, "Can Yeshua do miracles?" Matthew's answer to that is already unmistakable. The deeper question is, "Who is this King, and what does His authority mean for those who encounter Him?" Matthew 8 invites us not merely to admire His power, but to trust Him, follow Him, and recognize that the authority of the Kingdom belongs to Him.

Opening Prayer

Lord Yeshua, help me to see You as Matthew presents You—not merely as a teacher whose words I admire, but as the King whose authority reaches into every part of life. Give me the faith of the centurion to trust Your word, the courage to follow when obedience is costly, and confidence in You when storms arise. Keep me from becoming someone who only recognizes Your power yet resists Your rule. Teach me to welcome You as King and to follow wherever You lead. Amen.

Commentary

When Yeshua came down from the mountain, the crowds followed Him. They had just heard Him teach with an authority unlike that of their scribes; now Matthew begins to show us what that authority looks like in action. Chapters 8 and 9 are sometimes read simply as a collection of miracle stories, but Matthew has arranged them carefully. The One who spoke with authority in the Sermon on the Mount now demonstrates authority over sickness, nature, spiritual powers, sin, and even death. His words and His works belong together.

Matthew is also preparing us for a question that will come in chapter 11. When John the Baptiser asks whether Yeshua is truly the Coming One, Yeshua points to what people are hearing and seeing: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear,

the dead are raised, and good news is proclaimed to the poor (Matthew 11:2–6). Chapters 8 and 9 provide much of that evidence. The works of the King help identify the King.

Yet Matthew is interested in more than power. Throughout these chapters, people must decide how they will respond to the King. Some come with remarkable faith, others hesitate, and still others resist Him. The miracles reveal Yeshua, but they also reveal the people who encounter Him. And the first person Matthew brings before us is perhaps the last person many in the crowd would have expected.

The King Touches the Untouchable (Matthew 8:1–4)

The first person Matthew brings forward is a leper. We need to be careful with that word, because biblical “leprosy” does not necessarily refer to what, since the 19th century, we now call Hansen’s disease. The Hebrew word tzara’at covered various skin conditions and could even affect clothing and houses. Whatever this man’s precise medical condition, Torah classified him as tamei—unclean—and that meant his problem was much larger than his skin.

Leviticus 13 required someone diagnosed with tzara’at to live outside the camp and warn others of his condition. Imagine what that meant in daily life: separation from family, community, and ordinary participation in worship. There is desperation in this man’s approach to Yeshua. He has lived at a distance from others, yet now he comes directly to Yeshua and bows before Him. In a sense, this man who has been treated as one of the living dead sees life standing before him. Matthew could have introduced the King’s miraculous

works with someone prominent or respectable. Instead, the first person we meet after the Sermon on the Mount is an outsider.

“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean” (8:2). Notice what he does not question. He does not ask whether Yeshua can do this; he believes He can. His uncertainty concerns Yeshua’s willingness, and the answer comes immediately: “I am willing; be cleansed” (8:3). But before Matthew tells us that the man is cleansed, he records something extraordinary. Yeshua stretches out His hand and touches him.

Yeshua did not need to touch the man in order to heal him. The very next story will show us that He can heal with nothing more than a word and can do so from a distance. Yet here He deliberately reaches out His hand. How long had it been since this man had experienced ordinary human touch? We are not told, but for someone living with tzara’at, touch may have become a distant memory. Yeshua could have cleansed him first and touched him afterward; instead, He touches him while he is still the man everyone else has learned to avoid.

Normally, contact with uncleanness moves in the other direction: the clean person becomes unclean (Leviticus 5:3). Here the man’s uncleanness does not overcome Yeshua’s holiness; Yeshua’s cleanness overcomes the man’s uncleanness. The King does not become contaminated. The leper becomes clean. That pattern will become increasingly important as

Yeshua encounters other people whom society regarded as unclean, compromised, or beyond reach.

Back to Torah

Yeshua then tells the man to show himself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded (8:4). Leviticus 14 provides the procedure by which someone healed of tzara’at could be examined by a priest and formally restored to the community. The priest does not perform the healing; he confirms that cleansing has taken place. Yeshua therefore restores more than the man’s skin. The priest’s declaration will allow him to return to ordinary community life, and the man who had lived on the margins can come home. Yeshua honors Torah by sending him to the priest exactly as Moses instructed.

Life Application

There are people we learn not to see. Sometimes their condition makes us uncomfortable, sometimes their reputation precedes them, and sometimes we quietly decide that getting involved in their lives will be messy. Yeshua saw the man everyone else had learned to avoid and moved toward him. That does not mean wisdom disappears or that every boundary is wrong, but it does make me ask an uncomfortable question: Who have I decided is untouchable? The King who calls us to follow Him is not frightened by broken people. Neither should we be.

The King Welcomes Unexpected Faith (Matthew 8:5–13)

The second encounter begins to establish Matthew's pattern of surprising us with the people who respond to Yeshua. The first was a Jewish man whose uncleanness had pushed him to the margins of the community. Now a Roman centurion approaches Him—a Gentile officer serving the occupying power. Yet this man comes not seeking something for himself, but pleading for a servant who is paralyzed and suffering terribly. Yeshua responds without hesitation: "I will come and heal him" (Matthew 8:7). Once again, Matthew shows us a King who is willing to cross boundaries that often kept others apart.

The centurion's reply is remarkable: "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed" (8:8). His military experience has taught him something about authority. He gives orders and expects them to be carried out because the authority of Rome stands behind his command. Somehow, he recognizes that Yeshua possesses an authority greater than his own. Yeshua does not have to be physically present beside the sick man. He need only speak, and sickness itself must obey.

Matthew then tells us that Yeshua marveled. That is worth noticing. We are accustomed to people being astonished by Yeshua, but here Yeshua is astonished by someone else. What impresses Him is not the man's position, education, ethnicity, or religious background, but rather—his faith. "I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel" (8:10). The statement would have startled Matthew's Jewish readers, because this exemplary faith comes

from a Gentile—and not merely a Gentile, but a leader in the occupying force dominating the Jewish people.

We should be careful, however, not to make Yeshua's words into a rejection of Israel. The next thing He says actually places Israel's patriarchs at the center of the picture. Many will come "from east and west" and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven (8:11). The nations are not being invited to a table from which Israel has disappeared; they are being welcomed to the table of Israel's fathers. This reaches back to the promise to Abraham that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1–3). The surprise is that some who assume their place at the table is guaranteed will discover that ancestry without faith is not enough.

That distinction matters, particularly when Matthew is read in the long shadow of Christian history. The point is not that Gentiles have replaced Jews. Matthew is showing us that the blessings promised through Israel's Messiah are reaching the nations, just as the Scriptures anticipated. Neither Jewish ancestry nor Gentile ancestry is the basis of faithfulness to the King. The centurion stands before Yeshua simply as a man who recognizes His authority and trusts Him.

The miracle itself is almost understated. Yeshua tells the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed," and the servant is healed at that very moment (8:13). No touch this time. No journey to the house. No dramatic action at all. The leper believed Yeshua could

cleanse him if He were willing; the centurion goes further and recognizes that physical distance places no limitation on the King. His word is enough.

Life Application

I find something wonderfully simple in the centurion's faith. He does not tell Yeshua how to solve the problem. He does not prescribe the method, demand a sign, or insist that Yeshua accompany him home. He simply recognizes who stands before him and trusts His authority. Much of our praying can become an explanation to God of precisely how we think He ought to act. The centurion reminds us that faith should leave the method with the King.

Matthew has another surprise waiting. Having touched a man whom society avoided and responded to the faith of a Gentile officer, Yeshua now enters an ordinary home. There He will take the hand of a woman lying sick with fever. The King's authority reaches from the socially untouchable, to an officer of Rome, to a sick woman in a family home. He is the King for all.

The King Restores in the Home (Matthew 8:14–17)

Matthew now takes us from a Roman centurion to Peter's home, where Peter's mother-in-law lies sick with a fever. Her illness may appear ordinary beside leprosy and paralysis, but Matthew does not measure human need by how spectacular it appears. Yeshua sees her, touches her hand, and the fever leaves immediately. She gets up and begins to serve Him (8:15). Her service is not repayment for the healing or an attempt to earn favor; it is the

natural response of someone who has been restored. The King's authority reaches into an ordinary home and an ordinary human need.

Yeshua again heals through touch. He has already touched a leper, and now He takes the hand of a woman. In the social and religious world of the first century, neither action would have been insignificant. Yet Matthew does not stop to explain or defend what Yeshua does. He simply allows us to watch Him move toward people rather than away from them. The centurion has just taught us that Yeshua does not need physical contact in order to heal, so when He does touch someone, the action carries a particular tenderness.

As evening comes, the private scene becomes public. People bring many who are demonized and sick, and Yeshua casts out the spirits with a word and heals those who are suffering. Matthew then does something characteristic of his Gospel: he reaches back into Israel's Scriptures to tell us what these events mean. He quotes Isaiah 53:4: "He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases." The healings are not merely demonstrations of extraordinary ability. Matthew sees them as part of the work of the Servant promised by Isaiah.

We should notice how Matthew uses this quote. Isaiah 53 will ultimately take us to the suffering and death of the Servant, but Matthew applies this particular verse directly to Yeshua's healing ministry. The Messiah has entered a world damaged by sin and its consequences, and wherever He goes we begin to see signs of restoration. Disease retreats,

demons are expelled, and broken lives are restored. These miracles give us glimpses of what the world looks like when God's reign will be fully established.

Jewish Insight

Isaiah 53 is sometimes treated as though it suddenly appears in Christian interpretation at the cross, but Matthew does not wait until the crucifixion to draw upon it. He sees the Servant already carrying the burdens of His people in Yeshua's ministry of healing and restoration. That does not exhaust Isaiah's meaning, but it reminds us that Matthew is reading the life of Yeshua as one continuous messianic mission. The One who heals in Galilee is the same Servant who will eventually give His life to deal with our sin and wandering. Isaiah 53 is about restoration—and the cost of that restoration in the suffering and death of Messiah.

Life Application

This passage also helps us speak carefully about healing. Yeshua's miracles encourage us to pray confidently for those who are sick, because healing is entirely consistent with the character and Kingdom of God. At the same time, the New Testament does not teach that every faithful believer will always be healed in every age. The Gospels themselves describe Yeshua healing many without suggesting that sickness disappeared from Israel, and the rest of the New Testament continues to acknowledge illness and suffering among faithful believers. After all, every person healed in those days later dies.

We therefore live with both confidence and hope. We ask God to heal because we know He can, and we rejoice when He does. At the same time, our ultimate hope is larger than recovery from any particular illness. Every healing points toward the day when sickness, suffering, and death themselves will finally be gone. The miracles of Yeshua are not only gifts to the people who received them; they are signs that the Kingdom has arrived in the King and foretastes the restoration still to come.

This chapter now takes a turn. After showing us people eager to come to Yeshua for what He can do, Matthew introduces two people who say they want to follow Him. Yeshua makes clear that receiving from the King and following the King are not always the same thing.

The Cost of Following the King (Matthew 8:18–22)

After several demonstrations of Yeshua's authority, Matthew interrupts the sequence of miracles with two brief conversations about discipleship. The placement is important. Crowds are gathering because of what Yeshua says and does, but admiration is not the same as discipleship. It is possible to be impressed by the King without being prepared to follow Him. These two encounters remind us that the call of the Kingdom involves more than enjoying its benefits; it involves placing ourselves under the authority of the King.

The first man is a scribe who approaches enthusiastically: "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go" (8:19). Nothing in Matthew suggests that his enthusiasm is insincere, but

Yeshua makes sure he understands what his promise might cost. “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (8:20). Yeshua is not making homelessness a virtue or requiring His followers to abandon every form of security. He is warning this eager man that following Him is not a route to comfort or advancement. There may be a price attached to going wherever the King goes.

This is also the first time in Matthew that Yeshua uses the title “Son of Man” for Himself, and the setting makes the choice particularly striking. Daniel had seen “One like a Son of Man” coming before the Ancient of Days and receiving dominion, glory, and an everlasting Kingdom (Daniel 7:13–14). Yet here that Son of Man speaks of having nowhere to lay His head. Majesty and humility stand side by side. The King who possesses everlasting dominion does not exercise His authority in the manner of earthly rulers, and those who follow Him should not expect discipleship to be a path to privilege.

The second man presents a different problem. He says, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father” (8:21), and Yeshua responds, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead” (8:22). To Jewish ears, those words are particularly jarring because honoring father and mother is commanded in Torah, and caring for the burial of a parent was a serious family obligation. Yet it is unlikely that the man’s father had just died. Had a death occurred, the burial would normally have taken place quickly, and the son would almost certainly have been occupied with those responsibilities rather than standing here discussing future discipleship with Yeshua. More likely, his request amounts to, “Let me fulfill my family obligations first; then, when the time is right, I will follow You.”

Yeshua is not overturning the commandment to honor one’s parents. He is exposing the word “first.” A legitimate responsibility can become an excuse when it is placed permanently ahead of obedience to the King. The first man seems ready to follow without counting the cost; the second recognizes the call but wants to postpone its cost. One is perhaps too quick to promise, while the other is too slow to act. Together they remind us that discipleship requires both a considered commitment and a present response.

Life Application

There will always be reasons to say, “Later.” When life settles down, when the family situation changes, when work is less demanding, when finances are more secure—then I will do what I already know the King is asking of me. Some delays are wise, and Scripture certainly does not commend impulsiveness. But delay can also provide respectable cover for disobedience. The question these two encounters leave with me is not simply whether I admire Yeshua, but whether He has the right to interrupt my plans.

Matthew now moves us straight from a conversation about following Yeshua into a boat where the disciples actually do follow Him. That is significant. They have heard the cost of discipleship explained; now they will discover what following the King can look like when obedience leads directly into a storm.

The King Commands Creation (Matthew 8:23–27)

Matthew now returns to the miracles, but this encounter differs from those we have seen so far. Yeshua has demonstrated His authority over sickness and has challenged would-be disciples to consider what it means to follow Him. Now those who are currently following Him discover that discipleship does not guarantee calm circumstances. They enter the boat because Yeshua does, and their obedience takes them directly into a storm. Matthew's sequence is worth noticing: the call to follow the King is immediately followed by an experience in which the disciples must learn whether they can trust the King they are following.

The Sea of Galilee is particularly susceptible to sudden storms. Lying about 200 meters below sea level and surrounded by higher terrain, it can experience violent changes in weather as air moves through the surrounding hills and valleys. Several of the disciples were experienced fishermen, so their fear should not be dismissed as the panic of inexperienced sailors. Matthew describes a storm severe enough that waves are covering the boat. Yet in the middle of all this, Yeshua is asleep. His sleep reminds us of His genuine humanity—He is tired enough to sleep through a storm—but it also creates the striking contrast Matthew wants us to see. The disciples are overwhelmed by circumstances while Yeshua remains completely at rest.

They wake Him with the desperate cry, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" (8:25). There is both faith and fear in those words. They know where to turn for help, yet they do not understand how safe they are in the presence of the One they have called Lord. Yeshua asks,

"Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" before He addresses the storm (8:26). The order is interesting. He deals first with the fear of His disciples and then with the wind and the waves. Their problem is not that they noticed the danger or asked Him to save them; the storm was real. Their problem is that the danger had become larger in their minds than the King who was with them.

Then Yeshua rises and rebukes the winds and the sea, and Matthew tells us that there is a great calm. For readers familiar with the Tanakh, the action carries enormous significance. Israel's Scriptures repeatedly identify God as the One who rules the waters. "You rule the swelling of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them" (Psalm 89:9). Psalm 107 describes sailors caught in a terrifying storm who cry to the LORD in their trouble; He stills the storm and brings them safely to their destination (Psalm 107:23–30). Matthew does not stop to explain the connection. He allows the action of Yeshua to raise the question naturally: Who exercises authority like this?

That is precisely the question the disciples ask: "What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (8:27). They have already seen Yeshua heal the sick and cleanse a leper, but this is different. Human beings may become physicians and perhaps even witness remarkable healings, but commanding creation belongs to another category. The disciples do not yet give a complete answer to their own question, and Matthew does not answer it for them. He lets the question remain in the boat—and invites us to keep reading.

Jewish Insight

The sea carries significant imagery in the Tanakh. It can represent danger, disorder, and forces beyond human control, while God alone is consistently portrayed as its Master. At creation He sets boundaries for the waters; at the Exodus He opens the sea for Israel; in the Psalms He stills its waves. Against that biblical background, Yeshua's command of the storm is more than an impressive miracle. Matthew is showing us the King doing what Israel's Scriptures say the God of Israel does.

Life Application

There is a tempting but mistaken conclusion that faithful discipleship should somehow keep us out of storms. This story teaches almost the opposite. The disciples are in this boat precisely because they followed Yeshua into it. Their obedience does not prevent the storm, and His presence does not mean they will never become frightened. What His presence does mean is that the storm never has the final word. Faith is not pretending that the wind is harmless or the waves are small; it is learning that the One in the boat is greater than both.

Matthew is not finished answering the disciples' question. They arrive on the other side of the lake and encounter two men so violent that others cannot even use the road. The disciples have just asked, "What kind of man is this?" The demons are about to supply part of the answer: "Son of God."

The King Conquers the Powers of Darkness (Matthew 8:28–34)

When Yeshua reaches the other side of the Sea of Galilee, Matthew takes us from the violence of the storm to another kind of violence. Two demonized men come out from among the tombs, so dangerous that people have learned to avoid the road altogether. The setting itself is filled with images of uncleanness and death: tombs, Gentile territory, demonic oppression, and soon a herd of pigs. Yet Yeshua walks directly into it. The One who has just demonstrated His authority over the forces of nature now confronts powers that have reduced human beings to isolation and fear.

Matthew tells us there are two men, while Mark and Luke concentrate on one. There is no need to force the accounts into identical descriptions. If two men were present, Mark and Luke are free to concentrate on the one whose story they wish to tell, while Matthew records both. More important for Matthew is what happens when they encounter Yeshua. Before He says anything, the demons cry out, "What have we to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the appointed time?" (8:29). The disciples have just asked, "What kind of man is this?" Remarkably, the demons know. They recognize both His identity and the certainty of a future judgment that has not yet arrived.

The demons then beg Yeshua to send them into a nearby herd of pigs. His response consists of a single word: "Go" (8:32). There is no contest between roughly equal spiritual forces, no elaborate ritual, and no prolonged struggle. The demons ask permission; Yeshua gives the

command; they obey. The herd rushes down the steep bank into the sea and dies, vividly displaying the destructive character of the powers that had controlled these men. Matthew does not explain every question the episode raises, particularly why Yeshua permits the destruction of the animals. His attention remains on the liberation of the men and the unquestioned authority of the King.

The reaction of the local population is perhaps the most unsettling part of the story. When they hear what has happened, the entire city comes out to meet Yeshua, but instead of welcoming Him they beg Him to leave their region. Matthew does not tell us precisely why. The economic loss represented by the pigs may have contributed, and the sheer power they have witnessed may have frightened them. Whatever their reasons, the contrast is striking: the demons recognize Yeshua and must obey Him, while the people encounter His power and want Him gone. Authority can compel obedience from demons, but Yeshua does not compel people to welcome His rule.

Jewish Insight

The setting would have felt thoroughly foreign to Matthew's Jewish readers. Yeshua has crossed the lake into predominantly Gentile territory, where pigs are being raised and demonized men inhabit tombs. Yet none of those boundaries limits His authority. The King of Israel does not cease to be King when He steps beyond familiar Jewish surroundings. Already Matthew is giving us glimpses of the widening horizon that will eventually reach the Great Commission: the authority of Israel's Messiah extends far beyond Israel.

Life Application

There is a sobering difference between recognizing Yeshua's power and welcoming His rule. The people in this story cannot deny that something extraordinary has happened, but their response is still, in effect, "Please leave." We can admire what Yeshua does, appreciate what He gives, and even acknowledge His authority while resisting the disruption His presence may bring. Matthew keeps pressing the question that has been developing throughout the chapter: not merely, "Who is this King?" but also, "What will I do when His authority confronts my world?"

Takeaways

Yeshua's words and works belong together. The authority heard in the Sermon on the Mount is seen in action.

Our words and our works need to be in sync as well.

The Kingdom reaches people others might overlook. No one is beyond God's care.

Entrance into God's Kingdom is not determined by ethnicity or social standing.

Following the King is different from simply admiring Him. Discipleship will involve inconvenience, uncertainty, and storms.

The miracles are signs of the Kingdom. They reveal not only what Yeshua can do, but who He is.

Recognizing Yeshua's authority still leaves us with a choice.

Memory Verse

"What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Matthew 8:27

What's Next?

The disciples have asked, "What kind of man is this?" Matthew continues answering that question in chapter 9. The King who has demonstrated authority over sickness, creation, and demons will now do something even more startling: He will claim authority to forgive sins. Along the way He will call Matthew himself, welcome people regarded as sinners, restore sight and speech, and even raise the dead. By the end of the chapter, the King's authority will lead us to His compassion—and His call for workers to join the harvest.